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- ¹ The purpose of this article is to seek a comprehensive understanding of China's development and the role of public policy by addressing some fundamental theoretical and practical issues¹. A comparative perspective is provided by reflecting on the idea of the welfare state in developed nations and revisiting and contrasting the case of the Chinese economic state². Arguing that Third World experience is under-represented in social policy studies at the same time as the focus/emphasis on the "social" or "welfare" in public policy may have contained a Western bias, the article reintroduces analytical framework of a policy system conceived by Robert Morris³. The long neglect by policy study of a guide to the priority aims and preferred means of a policy system is shown, and we highlight a recent groundbreaking effort to identify different general public policy patterns which dismiss the welfare state as *the* paradigm for public and social policy study. The difference between general public policy and development strategy is made clear, and the true meaning of a "developmental state" is clarified under the new comparative framework. A historical perspective is further presented by illuminating the processes of politicisation and de-politicisation of the Chinese economic state that has always zigzagged between developmental and non-developmental paths⁴. There is a need for people to monitor and prevent government public policies from following non-developmental paths, as it is important within economic development for both economic and welfare states to learn from each other as they constantly rebalance their policy foci. Implications for China's future development are discussed.

Welfare state and social policy

- ² Although developed nations are hardly the central focus in development studies, they do serve as examples of advanced states of development, as the word "developed" naturally suggests. In the developed world, public policy dialogue has featured an overarching theme and (once) a shared social ideal, i.e. the welfare state, although

nations had different tales to tell of their experiences of it⁵. After its rise and its fall, within a hundred years, what a welfare state actually is, however, has become increasingly uncertain, and its true meaning remains illusive and little scrutinised.

- 3 What are we really referring to when we talk about a welfare state? In very simple terms, we may just mean the social (welfare) functions of any government. However, we would tend to exclude a good many nations when we come to decide which could be considered welfare states. It seems that the label has a more symbolic meaning. Although the real picture is not always as rosy and just as the ideal implies⁶, this kind of state plays a pivotal role in promoting the welfare of its citizens, while the provision of welfare carries major weight in state affairs. This conception has to do with the relative importance allotted to the various functions of a government. Calling a country a welfare state does not mean, however, that the state does not care about the country's economy, politics, defence (or warfare) or other kinds of public affairs. But it does indicate an outstanding position adopted by the state on welfare provision in the light of historical and cross-national comparisons.
- 4 A review of Morris' framework of a policy system is in order here. By taking social policies as guiding principles for public action, Morris discerns several elements or dimensions that affect both their evolution and implementation. These include: a) a society's aspirations or goals; b) social norms or "societal policy"; c) a guide to the priority aims and preferred means of the policy system, or "general public policy"; d) sectoral public policy (e.g., income security, housing, health, personal social services, the family domain, and the aged); e) the leadership role played by governmental units in moving beyond or modifying social norms; f) advocated vs. adopted policy; and g) criteria for assessing policy guidelines (e.g., charity vs. rights or middle-class viewpoints, and distributive-regulative vs. redistributive)⁷. While there may be some problems with the completeness and logical arrangements of this framework, the concept articulated by Morris of a "general public policy" as a guide to the priority aims and preferred means of the policy system is of particular interest. A review of the literature indicates that, while issues on other dimensions or elements have been extensively studied, this aspect of the policy system has received little, if any, attention from policy and other researchers, including Morris himself. Yet this guide is so important that an inquiry that is blind to general public policy may simply cause confusion in cross-national studies. In practice, the world must pay most serious attention to this if it is to avoid repeating the numerous tragedies caused by state policies throughout human history.
- 5 As the welfare state has taken centre stage in public policy dialogue in the West, the field of social or welfare policy has often been placed in the spotlight. For many Third World countries, however, it seems that neither the ratios of social spending nor the foci of attention of their governments prove the idea of a welfare state as pertinent to their practice. Therefore, the welfare state should only be regarded as a particular rather than universal general public policy. Policy researchers are thus faced with the fundamental task of identifying other general public policy patterns that have also existed. Yet while the Third World is frequently the subject of development studies, it has carried little, if any, weight in social policy discourse, even in a new theoretical framework as broad and influential as the "three worlds of welfare capitalism" introduced by Esping-Andersen⁸.

The economic state and the case of the PRC

- 6 The issue of under-representing the Third World in social policy may not only hold back its development but also leave the welfare states helpless for the lack of comparisons and alternatives, as is the case when under-representing the latter in development studies. As a result, a more comprehensive guide for public policy and development study may never be found. The issue is particularly bothersome when dealing with socialist-communist states and those in transition from socialism-communism. Many researchers have explicitly limited their discussions about the welfare state to (mainly) capitalist societies⁹, and Esping-Andersen notes that a social order such as state socialism “has little use for a welfare state”¹⁰. However, not all have implied that the welfare state is not applicable to socialist-communist societies. Some have simply used the term(s) “(socialist) welfare state” in their study of Third World countries, despite the unresolved theoretical troubles of the welfare state in the West¹¹.
- 7 No new conceptual model promising more relevance to the development of the Third World was available or taken seriously until the “economic state” was uncovered¹². The economic state is not just another label, nor simply a different societal ideal. By examining the PRC as a particular, socialist example, the uniqueness of the typical economic state has been revealed in terms of fundamental differences, when compared to the welfare states, in its policy system as well as socio-economic and governance structures/functional prescriptions. For instance, the Chinese classical socialist economic state showed evidence of domination by a wide variety of economic departments, which represented major structural differences from any welfare state government. The economic state can also be defined in functional terms as a state in which the economy is promoted largely by the organised efforts of the government rather than by private institutions. In other words, it is a state that assumes primary responsibility for the development of the economy (just as the ideal welfare state does for social welfare). The label “economic state” points to the fact that the state plays a pivotal role in promoting the economy, and economic administration carries major weight in state affairs. To know why social welfare policy was so underdeveloped in a socialist country such as China, one must further understand the economic state from the standpoint of a Stalinist “big push” development strategy¹³. That strategy places top priority on developing the economy, particularly the means of production or the advancement of “heavy industry”¹⁴. Other state affairs, such as social welfare, had to be justified by their role in helping to promote productive forces and/or developing the economic infrastructure. Understandably, the main way of providing social welfare was through a model “perfectly” integrated with the economy, which in China was a welfare system based almost completely on occupation—or *danwei* (work unit)¹⁵—that went beyond the wildest imaginings of Mishra concerning an integrated welfare state¹⁶.
- 8 In sum, just like the welfare state, the economic state is also about the relative importance of various functions of a government, but its priority aims and preferred means are economic (or, when applied to people, work-related). It suggests that, by historical and cross-national comparisons, the state has adopted an outstanding position on economic administration. This position, in turn, affects policy and development in other areas, particularly in the social (welfare) sector.
- Developmental(ist) vs. non-developmental(ist) states: Importance and further analysis of general public policy

- 9 In view of the dilemmas arising in the practice of Western welfare states and the many unanswered questions concerning developing nations, the significance of the discovery of the economic state_general public policy can hardly be overstated. Yet that significance does not stop there; as we continue to examine and reflect on other general public policy patterns in world history, clarification is lent to the difference between a general public policy and a development strategy.
- 10 Compared with a “development strategy”, a general public policy does not take development for granted, as that universal assumption could be misleading. In real terms, presuming that development (in its typical sense) always proceeds in the interests of a government may not only be ignorant but also dangerous. In other words, the existence of non-developmental or even anti-developmental general public policies must be recognised and their causes carefully studied so that they may be prevented or stopped. In addition to the impact of various and conflicting political interests, the irrational aspects of policy-making, the role of misinformation, misunderstanding, and the emotional reactions of individuals, groups and society as a whole that affect the general public policy of a state have recently been pointed out¹⁷. In China, for example, the party-state has made (and, albeit reluctantly, admitted) many major mistakes that went against its own interests. The most fundamental, if not implicit, of these was to stray from its main mandate as an economic state. In general, development as an implied purpose, either in the economic or social sense, for a nation-state is not always valid, hence the world dichotomy between “developing” and “developed” countries. In that sense, the economic state and the welfare state may both be considered developmental states, while the warfare and political-ideological states tend to be non-developmental or counterproductive in nature. While it is possible to debate the general public policy of any state, it is only in the cases of developmental states that we can discuss different “development strategies”, otherwise we may just be unwittingly delivering futile talks about particular “developmental” issues. The identification of specific general public policy patterns should therefore be the first step undertaken in social policy and developmental research towards gaining a comprehensive view of the “forest” before we end up surrounded by the “trees”.
- 11 While “priorities” and “preferences” may appear to be minor technical concerns in certain fields, their consequences in public policy can be grave and devastating and their causes may be complex and hard to alter. Eventually, the states themselves will have to reap what they have sown. For example, the political-ideological orientation of the world’s socialist-communist states at their birth was not totally unreasonable since most of them were conceived in war and revolution, but its prolonged domination by a merciless dictatorship left little room for development. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies ended as the “communist empire” broke up and they dumped the Marxism-Leninism they had practised for decades—a sad story indeed for the international socialist-communist movement. In China, the intense politicisation of the economic state also brought the country to the edge of collapse. The signs of crisis had repeatedly prompted the government to attend to its main responsibility, that is, economic construction. However, it was only after Chairman Mao’s demise, with his successors envisaging the total failure of the Cultural Revolution, that the window of opportunity to “transfer” its focus to economic work was opened. The expected and unexpected successes of de-politicisation and economicisation, in turn, reaffirmed the new leadership’s conviction in an out-and-out economic state (even though reform

immediately started a structural and functional de-economicisation). Indeed, the achievements of the opening up and reform policies since 1978 would have been impossible without a determined general public policy focusing on economic construction (instead of the repetition of political crusades such as the Cultural Revolution once every few years, as Mao had speculated). It seems that a timely adjustment of the state's general public policy is a matter of life and death. The implementation of a general public policy will have its effect over time and in the long run control the lot of the state. Historians may see socialism in China as having failed completely, but at least the Chinese case shows that the failure was largely attributable to the damaging politicisation of its general public policy, or poor politics, while the economic state and its state-dependent economic system never really enjoyed a good chance of being systematically tested. (This does not mean that economic reform was unnecessary, but the situation could have been very different if the state had functioned fully as an economic state from the start.)

- 12 From the lessons of non-developmental vs. developmental public policies, we can draw two conclusions. The first is that, when evaluating and predicting a policy system, we will not arrive at a germane understanding and sensible conclusion unless and until we have analysed its general public policy. After embarking on the reform path, the Chinese state has probably faced no less criticism than before for failing to eliminate, and perhaps even for generating more, social issues, including increasing inequality, stagnating political progress, and diminishing social protection of its citizens¹⁸. However, the economic state has impressed the world with a stunning and continued high growth rate. And, after two decades of almost exclusive focus on the economy, it has put itself in a position to be able to address those social issues more actively (although that approach is still likely to be combined with economic interests)¹⁹. De-politicisation has already improved Chinese political life by reducing the impact of bad politics (although changing it to little or no degree despite the party-state's increasing efforts to fight corruption and at limited political reform). If re-politicisation is required to pursue democracy, it may also reopen the door to bad politics. In that sense, re-politicisation contains both great opportunities and enormous dangers that have the potential to push China forward or roll the country back on its road to development, particularly when people are unprepared for it. It should be noted that establishing a focus on the economy was never easy, and was almost tantamount to a regime change. Upholding it could prove even harder. Indeed, the post-Mao leaders have had to be very resilient in the face of strong resistance from the Leftists as they have sought to get rid of the old political-ideological state and stick to its new general public policy as an economic state, although the process (and the need for "stability") has undoubtedly also repressed democratic political activists. That determination of policy, drawing on the painful past experience of lost economic opportunities (as well as on current personal, factional and Party interests, etc., of course), can be considered the most fundamental "Chinese characteristic" of the recent development. Indeed, to develop the economy the leaders have left no stone unturned, even at the cost of other aspects of social life, including encouragement for everybody "jumping into the sea" (going into business). Many post-communist countries, including Russia²⁰, are no less open, reformist and capitalistic than China in recent years, but the remarkable differences in the respective economic outcomes should be attributed, at least in large part, to the differences in their general public policies. Without persistently putting its shoulder to the economic wheel with hard-devised strategies that will assure victory, a

reformist leadership may accomplish no more than lip service, or disservice, through endless economic and political chaos.

- 13 The second point is that people and future leaders should be educated about the importance of the general public policy of their state so that they may closely monitor and influence policy at that high level with a keen awareness and thus prevent it from falling into non-developmental paths. This can be done in multiple ways, including structural alterations in the government, changes in state spending priorities, and ideological shifts in leading/misleading the public. The point is that no matter how important a general public policy is to politicians, it is the people that have the highest stake in it. In this regard, the notion of development as a right declared by the United Nations in 1986 should be heeded²¹. Recently, for instance, some figures who questioned the move by the United States towards war against Iraq were pressured off the political scene. This is not surprising even in a Western democracy if the concerns were considered only as particular, sectoral policy-making issues with immediate consequences in international relations. However, if they were expressed in terms of the general public policy and whether the country would be led down a non-developmental path, then the close monitoring and questioning would be fully legitimised. As the people have the right to development, they have the right to be concerned about the general public policy of their state and of other states in the world, for these will no doubt affect their lives in a global environment. In his examination of the limitation of national interventionism in the United States, Waddell notices that in the 1980s there was a revival of a strong warfare/weak welfare paradigm for state power²². The concern in the case of Iraq is, on the surface, one of whether the Iraqi general public policy is anti-developmental in both a national and international sense and whether a regime change could be justified, as in Afghanistan, and how. The deeper issue is whether warfare will take control of the general public policies of the nation-states and bring about more rather than fewer non-developmental cases or periods²³. This discussion would be more meaningful than general talks on peace vs. war²⁴. Another example is that the American media is also accustomed to something called the “China threat” in the military sense. From the perspectives of general public policy and the economic state, however, the real threat in the post-Cold War environment has become an economic one, ever since China switched to a “strong economy/weak politics/weak warfare” paradigm for state power. The most obvious evidence is its ending of the Cultural Revolution and its bold measures to unilaterally cut its armed forces (by one million under Deng Xiaoping and half a million again under his successor Jiang Zemin). While the American state is devoting much of its attention to warfare and ideological issues such as human (political) rights, the depoliticised Chinese state has focused almost exclusively on “economic construction” by emphasising (economic) development as a human right and, albeit implicitly, the right of the economic state. It is predicted that the GDP of China will surpass that of the United States in 30 years²⁵. This difference in the general public policies of the nations will not be able to facilitate the process unless changes (forced or conscious) take place in either or both of them.

Welfare state vs. economic state: The issue of “isms” vs. emphases

- 14 The welfare state and the economic state, as well as the warfare, political and ideological states, reflect different guides to the priority aims and preferred means of the policy system. The question is how selective emphases on political, economic and

social ends and means characterise a nation's public and social policy. The study of general public policy is first concerned with the non-developmental vs. developmental nature of a policy system. Although there is always a mix and no pure pattern will be found in reality, some theoretical archetypes (e.g. the warfare, political-ideological, welfare and economic states) and practical paradigms (e.g. the American strong warfare/weak welfare and the post-Mao Chinese strong economy/weak politics models) can be identified. It should be noted that the recognition of different general public policy patterns, particularly the classification of practical paradigms, may be a matter of academic controversy and even political confrontation. For instance, some Americans and others may argue that American governments often, if sometimes forced to, put at least moderate emphasis on the stimulation of economic growth. Likewise, the United States is also strong on ideology and politics, hence a potentially more complex but pertinent public policy paradigm of strong warfare/strong ideology-politics/moderate economy/weak welfare for state power. It should also be noted that the meaning of the theoretical archetypes and the characterisation of practical paradigms are constantly changing or developing, as should our understanding. For instance, the Chinese economic state has been attributed very different importance in the post-Mao era compared with the Mao era. Its practical policy paradigm shifted from strong politics/vague economy and welfare (so to speak) to strong economy/weak politics/weak warfare/weak welfare/weak everything else (though after a two-decade-long focus on the economy, the state is now in a better position to get strong in the other areas). Moreover, although it is common sense that economy and welfare are important in development (in different ways) while politics/ideology and warfare can be detrimental to it, their characterisation of the policy system, as they represent the dominating general public policy, cannot be taken straightforwardly as developmental or non-developmental. There are just and unjust wars, and politics may hinder or liberate productive forces. For instance, although confrontations are often costly (and destructive), while they are overbearing they will seldom gain appreciation and reciprocal benefits (even in cases where international policing or peace-keeping is needed)²⁶. However, from a long-term point of view, there is historical evidence that the economic and welfare states can be considered developmental states while warfare and political-ideological states are non-developmental or counterproductive.

- 15 The economic state and the welfare state as different general public policies can therefore be considered as having different development strategies. Because of the importance of the general public policy in its effect on all sectoral policies, the problems we face in developmental studies are firstly issues confronting the different policy paradigms. Here we are not talking about different "policy regimes". The Chinese case shows that de-politicisation has largely resulted in the ideological issue of socialism vs. capitalism giving way to a practical concern over emphases (priorities and preferences) and balances in the strategic plans of the nation for development, particularly in view of Deng's will concerning "no argument"²⁷. The Party-state has shifted away from doctrinaire communism to a "socialist road with Chinese characteristics". Chinese communists, of course, would hardly accept such a label as pragmatism for what they have been doing, though switching from dogmatism to pragmatism was necessary for de-politicisation. Today's pursuit of this socialism with Chinese characteristics, with the emphasis on "Chinese characteristics" rather than on "isms", is a result of the simply too high historical price the state has paid in the past.

- 16 Western welfare states are at a similar crossroads²⁸. While a claim of “the end of ideology” is hardly ever true, there has been a consensus that the welfare state is in trouble and that the deep-seated issue is firstly economic rather than ideological. This serious developmental issue has led to a Western-wide movement towards welfare reform, which is also part of the reason why China will not become a welfare state, at least in the near future. In the United States, both Democrats and Republicans agreed to “end welfare as we know it”, and former President Clinton (a Democrat) signed the welfare reform bill into law in 1996 (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act). American mainstream opinion is that “only work works”, thus the main approach to welfare reform is to move people “from welfare to work”. However, this reform has not produced its expected effects²⁹. The key is that pro-work welfare reform requires a good economy³⁰. In fact, the idea of workfare is nothing new, and the reliance on behavioural change has never been successful in addressing welfare as an economic issue. If we look at China, the lesson is different but bears on the same point. Just as the dilemmas of the welfare state have led to welfare reform, the problems of the economic state have led to economic reform. Yet the Chinese experience shows that work has not worked, as putting all the people into an overstaffed economy and getting them to “eat out of the same big pot” only held down productivity. In a sense, the Chinese approach to economic reform by accepting unemployment and emphasising the building of a differentiated “social security” net in terms of a “serialised reform” (rhetorical at the beginning but more serious recently) can be characterised as a movement in the opposite direction—“from work to welfare”. Although China has headed towards a “socialist welfare pluralism” without a state welfare system comparable to its Western counterparts³¹, the Chinese experience provides important suggestions from the other end of the scale as to how far Western welfare reform can go. Studies of socialist welfare in Eastern Europe also contain similar implications³².
- 17 In a sense, the Chinese economic reform was a successful welfare reform, as it firstly separated statutory welfare from the economy and started treating business as business—with phenomenal results³³. In contrast, Western welfare reform has not been a successful economic reform since it has not found an effective way to link welfare with work. This certainly has important implications for Mishra’s differentiated and integrated welfare models in terms of which one is actually more feasible and advantageous³⁴. Yet the broader lesson to be shared by the welfare and economic states is that welfare reform and economic reform must go hand in hand. And the primacy of the economy in development must be recognised and reflected³⁵, however differently, in the general public policies or development strategies of both economic and welfare states. In this regard, a concern over the preoccupation among Third World states with “economism” and the focus of the United Nations on social as opposed to economic development³⁶, although they certainly have a point to them, may also mirror a “Western ethnocentrism” that has not proven very helpful to either the Third World or the welfare states themselves.
- The future of the welfare and economic states and the “socialist road with Chinese characteristics”
- 18 As a result of the seemingly irresolvable crisis, some Westerners have already declared the end of the post-war welfare state³⁷. Others talk about its resilience in the face of current challenges³⁸ and argue that the welfare state will continue to spread around

the world³⁹. These declarations, however, can hardly be fruitful without a new path being mapped out for the economic future of the welfare state. In this regard, attention needs to be paid to a recent effort that attempts to (re)introduce to social policy in the West the idea of development in its basic economic sense. Some do it through promoting “positive welfare”⁴⁰ or the building of a “sustainable welfare state”⁴¹. Others explore the possible ways out open to the welfare state in terms of various “third ways” (between capitalism and socialism, or a “right mix between the private market and state intervention”)⁴². Among the scholars, an outstanding advocate of the developmental approach to the future of the welfare state is Midgley⁴³. This approach gives a new meaning to social development that is not opposed to but combines social welfare with economic development, resulting in such innovative ideas as developmental social programmes or “developmental welfare”. These concepts engage the economic notion of social capital that is adapted from the welfare idea of social support networks⁴⁴. By illustrating the case for and against the redistribution of social welfare and the current hegemonic influence exerted by neo-liberalism on social policy, Midgley highlights the emphasis placed by social development on productivism and social investment and illuminates a comprehensive strategy for promoting social welfare⁴⁵. This strategy of redistribution through social investment involves the following aspects: increasing cost effectiveness in social welfare, enhancing human capital investments, promoting social capital formation, developing individual and community assets, facilitating economic participation through productive employment and self-employment, removing barriers to economic participation, and creating a social climate conducive to development. This groundbreaking effort actually transforms the meaning of social welfare and constitutes a rather radical proposal for a shift in the general public policies of developed nations from a typical redistributive welfare state to a new focus on social investment that facilitates, rather than impedes, economic development. This proposed departure from the welfare state represents, in a sense, a step towards the economic state, and here the experience of Third World development becomes highly relevant. This down-to-earth approach, in turn, provides a better example for the Third World to follow in advancing its welfare arrangements, not with the old redistributive welfare state nor in the neo-liberal sense of development, but in accordance with its primary concern about the economy coupled with a desire for matching social improvement.

- 19 On the other hand, the case of the PRC is the history of the extreme politicisation and then de-politicisation of an economic state that has finally embarked full speed ahead on development, which has taught the leaders a fundamental lesson about not allowing their general public policy to revert to a non-developmental path via re-politicisation. Bearing in mind the painful losses China now realises it suffered and a current urgent need to catch up with the rest of the world, Chinese general public policy will continue to be implemented in such a way that China remains a determined economic state for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, there has been a rapid process of de-economisation among central and local authorities as a result of economic reform, which, coupled with the ongoing de-politicisation, may be considered a gradual deconstruction of the Chinese state in recent years. However, as suggested by its success in the past two decades, the primacy of the economic state in development must be maintained by the constant rebalancing of public policy foci to achieve goals, which is instructive not only for the Chinese but also for the welfare states. To deal with various social issues in development, the economic state can also learn from the

historical lessons of the welfare states, including the new trend towards “developmental welfare” in the West.

- 20 The Western and Chinese stories of their welfare and economic states show that they have somehow moved towards each other from opposite positions, (e.g. “from welfare to work” and “from work to welfare”). Although it is unlikely that they will share the same ideal dynamic point of balanced socio-economic development—because of the various structural-functional and economic, political, social, and cultural differences—the welfare and economic states as different development strategies certainly can and should learn from each other. For example, by comparing China’s planned socio-economic change with that of the West, a lesson can be learned that economic reform and social (welfare) reform must go hand in hand.
- 21 PUBLIC policy study has suffered from a lack of models and frameworks suited to Third World development on the one hand and the impasse in the Western welfare state on the other. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of this, Morris’ framework of the policy system is reviewed and a theoretical breakthrough is indicated by identifying different general public policy patterns as different guides to the priority aims and preferred means of a policy system. The Chinese case is conceptualised as an ever-changing economic state, and the welfare state as *the* policy or development paradigm is seriously challenged. The economic state and the welfare state reflect the relative importance of economy/welfare in state affairs. An international and historical view is required to understand and apply these models. The practical paradigm of the Chinese state in the post-Mao era is further spelled out as strong economy/weak politics, in contrast with the US strong warfare/weak welfare paradigm. These can be expanded as a post-Mao Chinese policy orientation towards strong economy/weak everything else (e.g. politics, warfare and welfare) set against the pattern for the United States that is characterised by strong warfare/strong politics-ideology/moderate economy (compared to China)/weak welfare. The difference between development strategy and the general public policy is indicated, and the importance of studying different and conflicting general public policies is underscored. In evaluating and predicting a policy system, a germane understanding and sensible conclusion is impossible unless and until we have analysed the general public policy of that system. By recognising warfare and political-ideological states as likely to have non-developmental or counterproductive general public policies, the meaning of a “developmental state” can better be understood under the new comparative framework. The economic state and the welfare state, where variations require further scrutiny, classification and quantification, represent different development strategies. They need to learn from each other. Further, there exists a right of development and a need for people to monitor and prevent government general public policies from moving onto a non-developmental path.
- 22 These inquiries and findings have significant implications. Prior to the discovery of the general public policy, policy studies were guided by existing theories including traditional political economy. Yet for the Chinese, who practised socialism for decades, socialism became more confusing and unclear to many, as did its importance. As has been noted, Deng Xiaoping, the “designer general” of Chinese reform who was frequently labelled as a “capitalist roader” by his comrades and Westerners alike, never abandoned his communist principles. However, he was certainly disillusioned about the dogmatic “ism” that he had loyally followed and the associated ideological fights in

which he had participated. His “white cat/black cat” philosophy made a fundamental difference to his life and to China’s fate. On the other hand, capitalism has not been able to lift all countries out of developmental and non-developmental problems (e.g. poverty and war). A focus on the study of different general public policies and the factors affecting them in all different worlds will supply much needed new insights. In real terms, world peace can hardly be assured if the world’s citizenry is not made aware of the danger of non-developmental general public policies and the true meaning of a developmental state, no matter how many democratic or peace-loving individuals we would like to recognise. Likewise, economic theories have not successfully explained various types of economic growth, stagnation and crises, despite the phenomenal advances in econometric instruments and analytical details. The fundamental issues will remain unanswered if the policy concepts and models illuminated in this article are ignored. Among these is the “Chinese secret” in development in terms of an extraordinary economy-centred general public policy that grew out of its past mistakes and its keen awareness of the urgency of fulfilling the state’s chief mandate.

NOTES

1. The author gratefully acknowledges the helpful comments of two anonymous reviewers.
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